1954

OUTPOSTS

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OUTPOSTS

25

ROY FULLER

The Meeting

AT the ineffective meeting is received
The letter : 'From your guilt
I resign. I exculpate myself from all
Your pistols and libels.

'I shall devote myself henceforth to God
And the investigation of freedom.
I write from a country cottage where the chestnut
Makes miniature

'Images of itself with its sea-scum blossom.
Your world is urban and evil.
My cat advises me : remove my name, please,
From your list of dog-lovers.'

The committee composes its reply : 'We, too,
Have seen that tree in spring
Making pink blotting paper of the lawns.
And as for the shootings

'They were of those who would have let art die
With lovely anæmia.
Your cat is right : his name has been embossed
On our notepaper.

'Consider : we need your support who are able even
To formulate the questions.
Try to recover the original impulse
That led you to join us.

'For the season now is nearly over and
The orators put away
Their stools. The belting slows. The tubes are about
To leap from their racks.'

LEONARD CLARK

Larks and Curlews

BEHIND a hedge upon a northern moor,
I stood and watched through dripping thorn and leaf,
The hillside fields that pressed their soaking heads
Against the tattered blackness of the sky.
The meadow-flowers hung waterlogged, the grasses bent
Their broken backs and scythed the half-drowned bees;
And from a fringing bank of drunken fern
A draggled lamb stared woodenly at me.
And then from some bright nowhere in the clouds
A lark dropped down and stopped her song;
Another, still alive with Heaven, came
And sang awhile upon that rain-bedizened slope,
Until both ran away on plashing feet
Into a swishing sea of secret undergrowth.
But as they disappeared from speckled view,
Two curlews streaked across the glassy land
And cried aloud with eager, double voice;
The larks were silent but the curlews called,
And sound and light had never died
Upon the movement of that battered air.

LAWRENCE LIPTON

Death of a Poet

(*For Dylan Thomas*)

LET'S strike a mean and say his life
Was half as holy as a priest's. He told
His beads with rosaries of loves
And walked unfrocked among the saints
Dispensing blasphemous indulgences,
Elfin and with silver shod
A tousled head all flittered with
The pollen of wild flowers, his spoor
The scent of unicorn, an antic god.

A wracking time to be alive in,
Bruising as a shark's fin, catamount
And sly as any sidewinder to snake him
Unawares, rotten under any moon
And stinking in the sun for lack of love,
And yet he moved among them white
And winged shouting life against all death,
Unlearned in the art of dying,
Life-enthralled until his dying breath.

So young, so soon. Let's think of him
As one born swaddled in a winding sheet,
His life a brief rehearsal for eternity,
As one who broke the barriers of sense
And suffered all thereafter that one must
Who goes with onagers and deathless birds
Up to that high stone seat where one dies,
Goes mad, or wakes from dreaming to come down
Word-wild, song-struck and with a poet's eyes.

U.S.A.

KENDRICK SMITHYMAN

Sonnet

THE begging sonnet burning on his hand
ignites the city. With such flame he pours
redress and grievance further on the island.
The sun with small explosions quits the flowers.
which writhe like maidens in his simple garden,
cherish that rock on which is fixed their grip
as, dreadful now, he breeds them from his fiction
pressing their flame and words against his lip.

The seas experience once more the shore line.
Female, the coasts are trodden down by cloud
where the horizon slowly darkening
is hugely male. For this, no anodyne
except the flame and sonnet which incline
gull swirling down the bent of his regard.

New Zealand

D. J. ENRIGHT

Mist along the Inland Sea

GIVE us a sign, they cry, this credulous generation
And yet why not? What god relies on muddle for his
veneration?
The Buddhists and the Christians bicker
In the local press, and those seem fearful hypocrites
and these seem awful thugs—
Those build no hospitals, for all their vegetarian hauteur;
And these, in spite of all their texts, denounce a
heathen truce to neighbouring slaughter.
Give them a sign. Or knock their heads together.

Expense of spirit and a shameful waste:
is God an amateur of cat and mouse?
The garden is a fertile field for signs, it changes daily
with the weather.
Avid readers note the rugged manly pines, the clean
upstanding cedars—
Yet little fish still snap up littler fleas, in dry
electric jaws:
Quoting some ancient laws, industrious ants consume the
living butterfly:
Cicadas praise the sun, and then grow old, and sad as
creaking doors.

Give us one sign, as signal as the urgent tail of some
scared rabbit.
Eight hundred myriad deities manned this land, a thousand
years ago
—and birth control is not a heavenly habit.

Japan

PETER DUNN

Glancing through an Anthology

THIS one writes in riddling rhymes—
Beneath that fatal fashion
His iridescent paradox
Conceals a stunted passion.

That one skilfully dissects
With conscientious knife
The nerves of his relationship
With someone else's wife.

Another's sad about his soul,
Can't come to terms with lust,
Seeks refuge in self-knowledge
Against the body's "must."

A fourth has hooked an archetype
On a night of storm and spray;
One day perhaps he'll firmly gaff
The God that got away.

Dear fellow-men and fellow-poets
I thank you for your pains
Who have so exquisitely turned
Your losses into gains.

DOROTHY STRINGER

Haunted House

A LEATHERN toad in ivied wall;
Trees, by convolvulus in thrall,
Clutching at rooftops, shadowing the door
Where henbane droops its spore.

The cold-eyed spiders here have spun
Through stone-flagged kitchen; woodlice run;
The hearthstone's altar gives as Host and Wine
Corruption, ash and brine.

Cruelty hangs upon the air,
Fetid as from a wild beast's lair,
A tongueless murmur, numbing heart and head,
Flows from the evil dead.

ANTHONY THWAITE

The Ghost

TOO long desired and too much merited,
That ghost would not be laid, much less forgotten.
We asked, indeed, if it were really dead :
Ethereal plasma never smelt so rotten.

It stood between us with a vague disdain;
Sometimes an angel with long, drooping wings,
Sometimes a shroud, on every fold a stain,
But always white as shelved and buried things.

It lived with us and was our daily guest,
Familiar in our bed and at the table.
An old man with a cough, it gave no rest
And was too dull for any children's fable.

Before it had appeared, we knew of it
Through stories which embroidered as they spun.
Not one of their descriptions seemed to fit
The shabby innocence, the pawky fun.

A dreary leer was all its mouth could show.
Its eyes eluded each illusion's shape.
And yet, gone free a while, he knew we'd grow
Wild at the one who let it thus escape.

One day it vanished; we could find no trace
Of where the shambling eidolon had flown :
Until today I looked into your face
And saw its eyes reflected in your own.

CHARLES EDWARD EATON

April Encounter

THROUGH the garden with twilight-waking hand
She lets the purple shudder on the white
As though by blandishment to understand
The sweet, late rankness of the April night.

All day she kept behind her parlor door,
And never measuring the hours she spent
With what was not nor could be as before,
Bemused the ticking clock with her lament.

She knew wistaria was waiting there
But still withdrew until the festering gloom,
The mauve, obese pervasiveness of air,
Became the guest-intruder in her room.

And now a purple shadow on her dress
Persuades her that the flesh would smell of flower
If any arm should tighten in caress
And smother her contempt with carnal power.

There dusky figures rise and beckoning blend
Like apparitions that the earth concealed;
The taunting, tender, enemy and friend
Command and plead her to the purple-yield.

Until a figure darker than the rest
Loiters from the depth of shade and lingers,
And smiles as though he saw her when she pressed
Pendent purple limp between her fingers.

U.S.A.

JOSEPH CHIARI

To a child asleep

LULLED to sleep from fabulous leaves,
Dropped deep down beyond the spying senses,
Grope by your inner light through caves
Over magic strands or glass palaces;

Whether in the signless wastes of the finned world
Or caught in the spinning wheels of stars,
Move through timelessness, sowing the hours
As Tom Thumb pebbles in his uncharted wood.

May the sweet herbs of sleep feed
Your innocence and your white beliefs
That you live and move in a world of friends
Where falls and tumbles are your only griefs;

May you never be scared into surrendering the faith
That you can teach stars to sing and fashion
All things by the command of your mouth!
Long may you be spared the chains of reason,

Long may you dwell in spacious dreams
Which make of the earth a magic lantern
And of Heaven and Hell the painted slides
Which on the screen of the world vision unfolds!

Long may you keep your mansions warm
And your fairies alive, long may you mock
The illusion of a world measured by the senses,
And through life, whenever lost, remember Blake.

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

Leonardo da Vinci

HE is ourself thrown larger, like a shadow
Looming on the wall, huge, and yet fallible,
Man in excess. For genius is a scrawled
You and you, a caricature, cartoon
Of bold, dark chalk marks, beaked, immense, all angles,
Not the common, smooth, mild stranger in the roadway.
Darting, like a child who drops a toy to grasp
A flower or follow the web of shadows drifting
Over what green meadows and sunlit acreage.
His thought in its twisting, tiring, starting and ending
Is our fault and our failure, and yet the triumph
Of all in one. An eagle, a bronze-sharp falcon,
Knapped flint, keen, glinting bird thrown to the wind,
Turning for its quarry, stoops first to the quail
Before, with flailing wings it mounts to the sun,
And again, deflected, follows the heron's grey
Feather, and falls to the wrist awaiting it.

He, tossed from God's hand, twisted awhile and tested
All earth, all air, all water, and then returned
Leaving the air grieving, wonder remaining.

IAIN CRICHTON SMITH

It was a Country

IT was a country white and clear as diamond :
every stone glittered mica in mid-air :
children grew hard out of the emerald stone,
playing with beads of sunlight bright and rare.
No names or hearts cut in the pastoral trees
no statues in the square.

It was a land made to be written on
with words carved out of the shining sky.
Everything new and clear and scrubbed by sun,
the old had long ago rocked purely by
into oblivion. There was nothing to be done
but let your shadow in the water lie.

Like fish in air the mica glittered clear
out of noon. At night the blue lights gave
gifts to the mind crying aloud for colour
more beautiful than flesh awaiting love :
the country veined like a hand enveloped
in that light's glove.

Yet hard and virgin ready to be pulled
out of the sea of light with burning hand
one felt the clouds pressing from the horizon :
the heart was shaken by a foreign sound,
as if a strange plane uncaught in the searching beam,
not to be found,

were somewhere turning, taut with venom, here
or there or everywhere its smooth blank face,
ticking invisibly, clock lost to love,
bearing a future which the heart must trace
in beams of blood across the tranquil sky
now soft as grace.

VAL VALLIS

Sea Things

The Gull

WHERE oceans broke and seas resumed the world,
You were the sea-bird poised on the wind's high branch,
Your wings a promise of the hidden sun.
Then I had eyes to plot your curve alone,
Heart but to feel your talons, ears to hear
No thunder's throat, but the bird-cry in its dark . . .
Your cry that was a shapeless, bitter love.

Sand-hill

Seeing the sand-hill spill complacent gold
In the hour-glass of the sky and sea,
It is easy to forget you are the bone,
Bare through the torn, green flesh of the world,
Where Storm and Time contend with salted whips.

The White Mangrove

Leaf by leaf my wild grief blows away,
Leaving the leaning stem above the tide
To cast its index shadow round the dial,
Pointing no hour, yet pointing always Time.
Time, whose bell-voice breaks the bird,
Who hides the sand-hill's bone beneath the shore
Will close his fingers round the leaf-lost tree,
And with salt fire consume its life away.

Australia

G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

Police

THEY follow me, left right, left right.
I look in windows to let them pass.
The crowd pass, not they: if I turn,
They're out of sight, yet the blank eyes burn
Patient, reflected in the glass,
For I am the man, the man they want to question.

Why watch, why wait, not arrest me now?
I may nod, perhaps, to the wrong man,
    Or ring, perhaps, at a certain house:
    Too nonchalant, or too much fuss,
A man with a plan, or too little plan,
The marked man, the man they want to question.

They follow me, left right, left right,
They watch me with unblinking eye
    Till fear and creeping tiredness
    Confuse me, force me to confess
A *yes* to the thing I must deny,
Deny—deny—deny when the bland men question.

ALAN SHAW

May to Midsummer

MAY to midsummer is the Holy Ghost's time.
Rhododendron laps the fell foot, lakes
Of soft burning. The dark hawthorn in the hedge,
Heavy with blood,
Blossoms from the solitary and spiny tree.

Composite fire flowers wheel in borders,
Multicoloured the rose buds in the walled garden
And the mauve lighting falls.

Having no image, time and place
Conceive, marriage creates
The ascending heat of the sun,
Parthenogenesis in flower and space.

The poet juggling his simple symbols
Finds them crumbled to dust in his fingers.
This muse is amorphous and will not sleep
In a fancy bed at will, but
Breaking image, metaphor and time
Is localised in the burning peony and the obedient word.

EPITHALAMIUM

(To H. and J.)

THE private and rude thoughts that friends may write
concerning private parts you choose to play
perhaps are nuptial music—or discover
between the sheets and written reams, the lover
is always public-house where poets pay
in fancy for the wine that seals delight.

Be this no mute occasion fingers write
names on the wedlocked wall in the house of play,
warning what gentleness may yet uncover,
rise private from the distances of lover
to settle differences of work and pay,
achieve production of the same delight.

Find no offence my wish wherein I write
joys as the lot attendant on your play—
God grant it a long season!—I discover
nothing more meet than cast to play the lover
and love the labour heedless of the pay,
rich in the writs and rites that write delight.

Jealous for happiness therefore we write
innocence away while children play
under the window, inexpert, discover
strangeness in snailshells—curious talk the lover
of bigger-sister utters—odd that he'll pay
them all to leave the room to phrase his queer delight.

So do I find all in its place and right
the known occasions that we make our play
a public utterance which own hands discover
make privately more true to play the lover:
and in the court to custom which we pay
find further measurements to our delight.

Your wealth in each—rich treasures—would I write
as my last wish while you commence your play—
the curtain rising, launched, you will discover
eyes of the world concentred on the lover
publishing the acts for which he'll pay
his measured length establishing delight.

Private and proud, discover that delight
is sum and summer of the lover's pay;
the play's the thing that love alone can write.

New Zealand

GEOFFREY HOLLOWAY

Double Vision : Spring

THE cat among the grasses nodding as it sniffs—
like a new-bathed infant shaping for a kiss.
The swans opulent, their bulrush-furry throats
ringed, rippling, with filamented light.
Shadows that are swallow-blue, yet brittle-clear,
that match the trespass of chrysanthemums released
by lancing heels of divers whanged from trees—
and all along the towpath the spun
rod, the dainty float cavorting in the sun.
To have eyes. To see.

The stagnant salmon like a crippled submarine
leprous in the shallows by the dripping arch—
a bone-white mouth insensitively working,
a quiet stammer—hung with sentences of death.
What was colour, kick and phallic exultation,
that shook the stream with the torpedoes of a myth,
laid-up like David for a chit of useless warmth,
like sunken David, once the season's pleasant king,
for a stone tribute, a buck's delinquent sling.
To have eyes. To see.

REVIEWS

The Modern Writer and his World : G. S. Fraser (Verschoyle, 16s.).
Images of Tomorrow : Edited by John Heath-Stubbs (SCM Press, 10s. 6d.).

IF there is a need for a "plain man's guidebook" to modern literature, Mr. Fraser's book performs the task admirably and comprehensively. To the uninterested layman, if he ever bothers to consider it at all, modern literature may well appear to be a chaotic mess of imprecise tendencies. This book would enable him to see his way through the maze; if he could be persuaded to read it. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether the bulk of public-library-attending readers is as worried about the subject as Mr. Fraser appears to think. No, the true home of the book is the W.E.A. class on Modern English Literature, and it should prove valuable to overworked tutors.

The book is based on lectures given to Japanese students of English Literature at Tokyo University and this background explains the book's lucidity and readability. It also explains why so many elementary details are included and why the author begs so many important questions. The best chapter in the book is on poetry and one hopes that one day Mr. Fraser will expand it into a book, so that we may judge his work fairly and seriously. The present book is little more than a pot-boiler and adds nothing to its author's reputation, despite the misleading grandiloquence of the title.

Mr. John Heath-Stubbs is concerned in his anthology to indicate "important levels of truth" of contemporary historical significance, expressed in terms of poetic imagery. It is, in the broadest sense, a religious anthology, despite the fact that many of the poets would deny any explicit faith. The standard is, with but two exceptions, commendably high and the poems do achieve a degree of coherence in relation to the editor's purpose. One of the two exceptions is a poem by the editor himself. After reading the second line—"To a horrid old witch in her womb of wattles"—I could go no further. Laughter became my master. The other exception is a three-line contribution by John Fairfax :—

> "This I say, as I touch a rock
> With a blind hand, is fact.
> This I say as I touch the sky is truth."

Interesting, and probably true, but not poetry. Mr. Fairfax should study the poetry of Kathleen Raine to discover how to express such thoughts in true poetry.

B. Evan Owen.

Leichhardt in Theatre : Francis Webb	(Angus & Robertson, 15s.)
Sun Orchids : Douglas Stewart	(„ „ 25s.)
The Gateway : Judith Wright	(„ „ 15s.)

THE young Australian poet, Mr. Francis Webb, attracted the attention of discerning critics with his first book, *A Drum for Ben Boyd,* published in 1948. In this long narrative poem the main character, an adventurer in Australia, is presented only through the comments of the various people who had known him at some point in his wild career, so that the poem has the effect of contributing something to the growing Australian mythological pattern. The title of this second book takes as its subject another figure from Australia's past—Ludwig Leichhardt, a Prussian explorer who managed to journey across the continent from south to north in 1845, failed to cross from east to west in 1846, and finally disappeared on his second effort to achieve this in 1848, leaving no trace behind him. Here we have all the necessary ingredients for the creation of a legend.

But Mr. Webb makes little attempt to build up the legend, or to provide from his imagination the missing details. Indeed, one is left with the impression that he is concerned with presenting his own conflicts through the mind of his chosen mouthpiece, so that instead of catching even a glimpse of the mysterious figure around whom a legend might have been woven, one sees only the energetic Mr. Webb on the stage, acting the part of Leichhardt in his stovepipe hat and flapping tail-coat. And very dramatic the act is, very striking the imagery. Yet one can never quite believe in his Leichhardt, however interesting the performance and authentic the background against which it is given. Perhaps it is not important that one should, but the feeling persists long after the book has been put down, that a remarkable opportunity for a poem of vital significance has somehow been thrown away, and what remains can never be more than second best.

Mr. Webb should, however, be complimented on his original conception and his vigorous language which by its rough texture recreates the landscape of this unknown country. His shorter poems

demonstrate his gift for seeing life from an individualist's angle, with all its complexity and colour. We may expect to hear a good deal more of this talented poet.

Those readers who are acquainted with Mr. Douglas Stewart's essays and critical studies, his ballads of his verse-plays featuring such heroic-scale characters as Scott of the Antarctic and the bush-ranger, Ned Kelly, will be surprised to find this versatile writer concentrating upon the flora and fauna of Australia, his adopted country (he is a New Zealander). After the excitement of *Glencoe* and the raw emotions of *Shipwreck,* Mr. Stewart has suddenly paused to look through "the eye of God for one clear moment" at the activities of centipedes, water-scorpions, spiders, bandicoots, devil's coachhorses, magpies and mopokes, and to study the wild orchids. For most of us this is a new Stewart, an indolent Stewart, content to laze on the grass and observe the life of the "little kingdoms", but certainly not the naive nature-worshipper the change might suggest. For he is alert to the drama being played out at these different levels, and sees more than symbols of the conflict between life and death, good and evil, known to mankind. The familiar Stewart is represented in this collection by two long poems, of which *Worsley Enchanted* shows that he has lost none of his skill with narrative.

With the poetry of Judith Wright one reaches a deeper level of experience altogether, a level at which both the simplicities and complexities of human existence meet and unite in a sudden flash of understanding. To say this is in no way to discredit or make light of the achievements of Mr. Webb and Mr. Stewart, who would probably be the first to acknowledge her superior powers. The Australian environment makes its presence known in her use of imagery and in the background to her poems, but there is a great deal more to the world she inhabits than that. It is neither a physical nor an intellectual world, though both the physical and intellectual elements are there, activated by the essentially feminine totality of apprehension :—

> "I am the woman statue of the fountain
> out of whose metal breasts continually
> starts a living water; I am a vase
> shaped only for my hour of holding you."

Miss Wright is deeply concerned with the mystery of life, the blind urge thrusting through the darkness, the potentialities of love,

the oneness of earth and root and flower. Death, for her, is intricately bound up with life itself :—

> "Draw from the flying dark its breath of dew
> till the unliving come to life in you."

and out of darkness and chaos come the light and the creative pattern :—

> "The root goes down in the night
> and from night's mud
> the unmade, the inchoate
> starts to take shape and rise."

ANTHONY NEWMAN.

Poems : Elizabeth Jennings (Fantasy Press, 5s. 0d.).

MOST contemporary poems are frivolous exercises in sentiment or technique. Few could possibly be considered activities of those functions which distinguish the human being from the calculating machine and the ape. Though various zombies jitter through their jungles or deserts, these landscapes have no appeal to that higher organism whose fullest expression is a fusion, at their most intense, of intellect, passion and senses. Even most of the poets who deserve some respect are usually serious without passion, or passionate without seriousness.

Thus any poems like Miss Jennings' which show signs of fulfilling a higher demand, are warmly welcome. Here the passion, under the strictest intellectual control, is never absent; and poems like *Identity* and *The Island* are, within their terms of reference, virtually perfect. It is difficult to quote from this book, because the passion for intellectual accuracy goes to rather extreme lengths, and the sensuous image and the fine line practically never appear. Indeed, there is some monotony, even in the rhythm and syntax. All this, especially in so young a poet is vastly preferable to its contrary of shallow over-exuberance, so long as it does not divert the poetic creativity into nothing more than a cosy intellectual parlour game. The slighter of these poems barely escape this danger; but it is Miss Jennings' triumph that she so often transcends it and sets even the drier sticks into a real blaze of passion and intellect. Still, little further development seems possible within these limits, and one hopes that her next book may add the third great element—the sensuous world. Such criticisms are only worth bothering about because her present achievement is so fine. This

book is not just promising: it is excellent in itself, one of the few non-second-rate products of a sloppy period.

ROBERT CONQUEST.

The Fantasy Poets: *No.* 13, Michael Shanks; *No.* 14, Mitchell Raper; *No.* 15, A. Alvarez; *No.* 16, Thom Gunn; *No.* 17, Anthony Thwaite (Fantasy Press, 9d. ea.).

Of Love: Tom Boggs (Hand & Flower Press, 3s. 6d.).
Spring and Death: Charles Higham (Hand & Flower Press, 3s. 6d.).
Now is the Winter: Peter Robins (Poetry Manchester, 2s. 6d.).
Survivor's Leave: Charles Causley (Hand & Flower Press, 3s. 6d.).

IF only it were true, as Anthony Thwaite believes, that

> "To keep potentiality
> We only need to say 'we will',"

the five Fantasy Poets might pass for excellent men. Mr. Thwaite himself hides his potentialities behind a rhymed lattice, the intersections where Donne and Tennyson cross being clenched with a sharp modern prong. He is much possessed with one or two of the contacts possible to flesh. Thom Gunn nobly strives for objectivity which (alas) cringes to caricature. Rhyme and the regular line defeat his vigour. A. Alvarez is subtler, the clarity of his regular rhymed lines dating from Eliot's 1920 volume, sprinkled with a paprika of proper names. He is not free from the temptations of phrase-making. Michael Raper is more assured because he is more tentative—not being certain of his direction, he gives an impression of seeing honestly. His *Louis The King* points one way, his *In the Drought* quite another. Michael Shanks is the most accomplished of this group, though he needs to pay more attention to his line-endings. *Children in the Park* needs cutting, the factual clashing with the gnomic: *Gateway to a Maltese Villa* also gives scope for unnecessary lines which probably the author mistakes for his best. These five poets together leave a feeling of genuineness, somewhat misdirected.

Tom Boggs has fifty attractive ways of saying the same thing about the same thing. *Plus ça change. . . .* If the transcendental seems mainly the transatlantic; if Herrick is veiled by Cini Willoughby Dering; if "the clear cry of bird . . . makes theatre of the air"; if the "something else to which love grew" proves in the

end to be "something like a cathedral flying"—well, whose withers are wrung, anyway? "Attractive" is the obvious epithet. Here's no depth, no circumambient consciousness (however, suggestion is attempted by considered references to Greece, Rome, West Third Street, God, O'Flynn, and General Grant), no sense of much beyond a movement towards the unavoidable embrace. Yet—well, attractive.

Charles Higham plays entrancingly with sestina and other rhymed formal manners, takes a glance or two at what Kirkup's left of the surgeons, spends some time Listening To A Waltz Called Fascination, addresses William Empson as Hopkins addressed God, considers that "a romanesque of roses" (clever, that twist!) played on the piano makes "of our lives a novelette", chases *The White Hart* away from a stag party, and appends three poems (including *The Failure*) after his *Epilogue*. Civilized, sensitive, and assured, he writes as though he believes in "the fragile world".

For Peter Robins the Manchester air crystallizes into coloured snow. His heart, finding Hardy-like narrative *un peu banal,* beats desperately behind his words, which carry concrete images like Baudelaire's chimera-laden men. His eyes are fascinated by things and people in solemn action (see *The Travellers*), but their chiaroscuro develops a plum bloom, rare and delightful, particularly (for example) in the poems on Denton Welch and George Gershwin. Everything in this collection is a pleasure to read, whether subtle (*Early December*), harsh (*My Autumn Gunman*), bitter (*Harvest Festival*), or full of sensibility (*The Young Man Pulls An Evergreen*).

Charles Causley's extraverted hornpipes fail to blow away the morning dew which gleams nostalgically on the naval bugles. It seems to be pay-day on the Vainglorious: the ratings answer their names—Alfred Tennyson, Rudyard Kipling, Adam Lindsay Gordon, Roy Campbell, Wystan Auden (by proxy), Frankie and Johnnie, Gavin Ewart, and so many others adjusting their shrouds under the awnings of folk-song and sea-shanty. Elsewhere

> "The girls come whirling, their veils unfurling,
> But what has become of the tune?"

In the mess, many bones stick out of the stew: but it smells good, and is a recognisable old English dish. Tiddly-wink, old man.

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.

O Lovely England : Walter de la Mare (Faber, 10s. 6d.).
The Ermine : Ruth Pitter (Cressett Press, 8s. 6d.).
Dry-Stone Heaven : Eric Nixon (Fortune Press, 7s. 6d.).

THIS new collection of short poems by Mr. de la Mare will add nothing to his reputation. The good pieces do not equal the poet's best work; the poorer pieces are but charming diversions; the trivialities are more than usually trivial and might well have been omitted. The selection has been made from poems written over the long span of the poet's life and not previously collected. Thus their origin extends over more than half a century and the impossibility of putting a date to more than a handful is a reflection of the poet's agelessness and his eternal lyric youth.

Miss Ruth Pitter is a true poet and her latest volume, with the controlled music of her language and the penetrating sensitivity of her vision, is a joy to read and to possess. She is undoubtedly one of the two important women poets of her generation.

Dry-Stone Heaven is a first book of poems by a young Lakeland poet whose work has not received the attention it deserves. It is not easy for poets living north of Birmingham to make an impression on the Southern literati; they often remain but voices crying lonely in a rocky wilderness. Mr. Nixon deserves better treatment. Through the craggy imagery of his Lakeland surroundings he conveys the integrity of his vision, the fervour of his emotions and the intensity of his imagination. He is nearer to Donne than to Dryden, to Hopkins than to Hardy, to Dylan Thomas than to T. S. Eliot; but above all, he speaks with an individual voice that sometimes, despite the imperfections in this first collection, rings with the promise of greatness.

B. EVAN OWEN.